



Research Center
for European Analysis
and Policy



EMUNA Brief 8/2025

INTERPRETATIONS OF SACRED TEXTS

This English version has been prepared by the author

The word foreigner in the sacred texts

Imam Issa Refaey

Chinese Buddhist Temple Hua Yi Si, Rome - April 10, 2025

In opening, I address all of you with the greeting of Islam, may the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you. I also extend to all of you my sincere thanks and appreciation, and I am pleased and honored to participate with you today in this meeting on behalf of the Islamic Cultural Center of Italy – Great Mosque of Rome.

The definition of the word foreigner is a stranger who comes from a distant country. People call him a foreigner: meaning by this term a foreigner, or someone who has a nationality other than that of the country in which he lives, or who speaks a language other than that of his country of origin. The message of tolerance of Islam has come to all people and is not limited to a specific society or nation. Likewise, the message of Islam has come to elevate the value and dignity of man and call for equality among all, without any difference between Arab and foreigner, white and black. God Almighty said: "O mankind! Verily We have created you from a male and a female and made you peoples and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Verily, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Al-Hujurat: 13).

Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, emphasized the meaning of this verse in his hadith, according to which justice and equality between people are among the greatest principles elevated by Islam. No one has superiority over others except through good deeds, piety and good customs. He said: "There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab (foreigner), nor for a non-Arab (foreigner) over an Arab, nor for a white person over a black person, nor for a black person over a white person, except through piety. People come from Adam, and Adam was created from dust." The message brought by the Noble Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, is universal in form and content for all people. God Almighty says: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy for the worlds (creators)" (Al-Anbiya': 107).

Therefore, Islam has established controls and rules for morality and behavior that include a series of etiquettes and rights that protect the rights of others regardless of their geographical location, culture and language, thus leading to the generalization of love. Among the rules of behavior that Islam has established for relationships with others: Respect for others: comes from respecting the other, different in religion, race or culture, respecting his material and moral rights. The other has the right to respect for his body, his money and his property, his freedom, his dignity and his beliefs. Islam is a religion that

respects humanity and calls for respecting and honoring it. Therefore, the word “stranger” is not mentioned explicitly in the Holy Quran, because God’s will is that all people are loving brothers, not separated from each other by the barrier of place or difference in culture, but rather connected by one bond, which is humanity. God Almighty said: “We have indeed honored the children of Adam and led them to the land and the sea and provided them with good things and preferred them to many other things that We created, with [final] preference.” (Al-Isra': 70).

Islam has made not mocking, despising or belittling others one of the most important forms of respect. God Almighty says: “O you who have believed, let not some of you mock others; perhaps they may be better than they; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than they. And do not slander one another, nor call one another names. How slanderous is the accusation of wrongdoing against a believer! And those who do not repent are the wrongdoers.” (Surah Al- Hujurat: 11).

However, God has made the method of difference and diversity a nature of this life and a type of its beauty, as He, the Most High, says: "And if your Lord had willed, He would have made all men one community. But they do not cease to be at odds with one another." (Huud: 118). God has confirmed in the Quran that the culture of diversity and difference is one of the good things that add beauty to life and is proof of His absolute power in the diversity of creation, as He says: "And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variety of your languages and your colors. Verily in that are Signs for those who have knowledge." (Ar-Rum: 22).

In closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all of you and I am happy to join you today. Thank you very much.